

University of Rhode Island DigitalCommons@URI

Letters (1979)

Education: National Endowment for the Arts and
Humanities, Subject Files I (1973-1996)

2016

Letters (1979): Article 03

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell_neh_I_42

Recommended Citation

"Letters (1979): Article 03" (2016). *Letters (1979)*. Paper 20.
http://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell_neh_I_42/20

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Education: National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities, Subject Files I (1973-1996) at DigitalCommons@URI. It has been accepted for inclusion in Letters (1979) by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@URI. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@etal.uri.edu.

CORE OF PROPOSAL
TO ESTABLISH THE INSTITUTE
OF AMERICAN FOLK DRAMA

FACT: there is not enough folk drama available to the people of this country. This is why there is little study of it, few productions of it, and little publication about it.

FACT: Today, already tasting the celebration of the American Revolution Bicentennial, some local or regional and educational groups are turning their local folklore into drama.

WHAT IS PROPOSED is an organization, the Institute of American Folk Drama, IAFD, that will **PRODUCE** more folk drama, that will **COLLECT** and **PRESERVE** the folk dramas that already exist and the folk dramas that are now being made in the light of the Bicentennial, and that will help **SATISFY** and **UNIFY** in an important and time-tested way, thru the medium of drama, the search for national roots and the long feeling for a national identity in this country.

WHAT IS PROPOSED is a professional, permanent, and resident-touring Institute of American folk drama.

WILL IT WORK? It worked on a purely commercial basis for thirty years in the 19th century. And it is working now as local groups from around the country are collecting and dramatizing their and our priceless heritage.

HOW? The Institute, thru its collecting unit and its producing unit, will collect and produce existing folk dramas and improvise folk dramas on existing folklore and collect and preserve it. When enough has been collected, preserved, and produced, folk dramas will be presented in a home-base theater, tested, refined, and sent out across the land by the Red, White, and Blue touring troupes of the Institute. While touring, the travelling troupes will do research for new materials, collect existing folk dramas, and bring all of it back to the home base theater in the Institute for preserving, staging, and dramatization. Thus the collection and repertoire of the Institute will be comprehensive, continually renewed, always traditional and contemporary, and well preserved.

As with the touring companies that broke off from the Broadway productions between 1825 and 1855 and with the local groups today, playwrights, actors, researchers, compilers, audiences, readers, and the folk tradition will share in the collecting, producing, and preserving processes of the proposed Institute.

WHAT WILL BE THE COLLECTION & REPERTOIRE? Both will draw on the following American folk traditions: American Indian Lore, Afro-American Lore, European-American Lore, Spanish American Lore, Jewish-American Lore, and Oriental-American Lore. No one will be slighted, and only material on the experience of people in America will be collected and produced.

Moreover, part of the collection and repertoire will contain improvised plays on peculiarly American Stock Characters. These will establish an American commedia dell'arte, similar to the Italian one that swept Europe in the 16th century.

FACILITY: It will need, at least when in full bloom, a home plant in which there are a home base theater, an audio-visual library, enough rehearsal, storage, and work space for the operation of the productive unit of the Institute, and, IF IT IS NECESSARY for the Institute to be self-supporting, a number of classrooms, a conference room, and supporting facilities for a bar-restaurant, ice-cream parlor, book and record shop, and gallery. Whatever the supporting enterprises that may be included in the home plant, they must be financially stable choices.

PERSONNEL: Governed by a Board of Director and the professional personnel needed to operate all the activities of the Institute. High standards will be held and kept.

BUDGET: An estimated and informed statement of front money, establishment and operating expenses, and earned and unearned income is included in the whole proposal. Needless to say, if supporting enterprises are not needed to fund the Institute, the budget as stated in the whole proposal will reflect a severe cut in establishment and operating expenses. The budget is laid out, however, with a view of the IAFD as a self-supporting institution.

ESTABLISHMENT TIME: It will take at least three years, at most five years, to establish the Institute. Much depends on funding and facilities. At present, I want to emphasize, there is no national organization with the purposes of the proposed Institute.

BENEFITS: There are many.

1. It will collect and preserve in a time-tested and visual way our priceless American heritage.
2. It has vast educational and cultural benefits and can easily be incorporated into educational and cultural programs.
3. It has the potential to become a great American institution, a new method of appreciating and understanding what this country and its multi-colored blanket of people are all about.
4. It will help immensely to forge the long-needed national identity sought by many Americans today.
5. It will offer a new and unique way of showing the world what America is, since its collection and repertoire will be ideal for cultural exchange programs and international understanding.
6. It will clearly draw tourists and business to any community that takes it to heart and also will be in a position to patronize the businesses in such a community.
7. It will appeal to all ages and cut across political and economic differences.
8. It will add immeasurably to the meager collection of already existing American folk drama.
9. It will provide a constructive use of free time, as all the forms of free art do.
10. It will in source and in product and in inventory be truly of the people, by the people, and for the people.

CLEARLY, this proposal is a serious, joyful, and practical request for support for the IAFD. It is a request for financial, work, and time help. Please come forward if you can help.